

Food Stamp Program Overview

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM?

- People who live together and buy food and prepare meals together are grouped as a "household" for the Food Stamp Program. Husbands and wives, and children under 22 years old living with their natural, adoptive or stepparents must be considered as one household.
- Household members that wish to be included must be U.S. citizens or legal aliens.
- Able-bodied household members who are age 16 through 59 must register for work, and may be required to participate in a Food Stamp Employment and Training Program unless a specified exemption is met.

WHERE DO HOUSEHOLDS GO TO APPLY FOR FOOD STAMPS?

Contact the Rutherford County Department of Social Services. The office is located at: 389 Fairground Road Spindale, NC 28160 or you may call the Food Stamp Office at (828) 287-6165. The office is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 am- 5:00 pm.

FINANCIAL CRITERIA

- **INCOME**
 - Households who meet the gross and net income standards listed below may participate in the Food Stamp Program.
 - Households who meet the gross monthly income standard are then evaluated for the net monthly income standard after allowable deductions have been taken into consideration.

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM INCOME LIMITS October 1, 2003					
Households Where Elderly and Disabled are A Separate Household			All Other Households		
People in Household	Gross Monthly Income Standard	Net Monthly Income Standard	People in Household	Gross Monthly Income Standard	Net Monthly Income Standard
1	\$1,235	\$ 749	1	\$ 973	\$ 749
2	\$1,667	\$1,010	2	\$1,313	\$1,010
3	\$2,099	\$1,272	3	\$1,654	\$1,272
4	\$2,530	\$1,534	4	\$1,994	\$1,534
5	\$2,962	\$1,795	5	\$2,334	\$1,795
6	\$3,394	\$2,057	6	\$2,674	\$2,057
7	\$3,826	\$2,319	7	\$3,014	\$2,319
8	\$4,257	\$2,580	8	\$3,354	\$2,580
Each Additional Member	+ \$432	+ \$262		+ \$341	+ \$262

• DEDUCTIONS

Allowable deductions for the Food Stamp Program are listed below. The following deductions can be subtracted from countable income when determining a household's food stamp benefits:

- Certain dependent-care costs;
- Legally owed and paid child support;
- A percentage of shelter costs; and
- A medical expense deduction can be allowed for the portion of non-reimbursable medical expenses that exceed \$35 per month per household. This deduction is *allowed for elderly and disabled household members*.

ELIGIBLE FOOD ITEMS

Households **CAN** use food stamp benefits to buy:

- ✓ Breads and Cereals
- ✓ Fruits and Vegetables
- ✓ Meats, Fish and Poultry
- ✓ Dairy Products
- ✓ Seeds and Plants which produce food for the household to eat

Households **CANNOT** use food stamp benefits to buy:

- ✓ Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco
- ✓ Pet foods
- ✓ Soaps, paper products, or household supplies
- ✓ Vitamins and medicines
- ✓ Food that can be eaten in the store
- ✓ Hot foods

LIEAP:

Low Income Energy Assistance Program: a federally funded program that provides a one-time cash payment to help eligible families supplement their heating bills.

Applications are taken the first two weeks of November, upon approval checks will be mailed out in February. Certain guidelines do apply!

FRAUD INVESTIGATION

This service requires investigation of suspected "**welfare fraud**" and ensures collection of overpayments.

Investigative referrals come from anonymous phone calls, letter from a concerned citizen, computer data, information from other agencies, and staff referrals from within the agency. There are three types of over-issuance: client error, intentional program violation, or agency error. If the decision is to initiate investigative activity, it will then be determined whether the nature of the investigation is criminal, civil, or administrative.

How Food Stamp Benefits are Received

Paper stamps or food coupons are no longer issued in North Carolina. Electronic Benefits Transfer is now used to issue benefits to eligible households. Once a household has been determined eligible, they will receive an EBT card through the mail, only one card is issued per family. The card then needs to be activated at the Rutherford County Department of Social Services. The household may then purchase food at any authorized grocery store. Once a purchase has been made the amount of the purchase is automatically deducted from their account and the remaining balance is shown at the bottom of the receipt. The monthly benefits are added to the account the same day each month.

When You Receive Your Benefits

If your SSN ends in:	Your Food Stamp benefits are available after 6:00 a.m. on the:
1 or 2	3rd of every month
3 or 4	4th of every month
5 or 6	5th of every month
7 or 8	6th of every month
9 or 0	7th of every month

- **Benefits are available on weekends and holidays.**
- **Your balance at the end of the month is carried over to the next month.**

QUESTIONS?

Call Customer Service

24 hours a day

7 days a week

1-888-622-7328

